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U.S. DOUBT VOICED ON SPACE STATION

Study Sees No Need for Costly Science Research Mission in the Next 2 Decades

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15 (AP) — The United States will not need an expensive manned space station for scientific research in the next two decades but such a station could eventually be useful, a study group for the National Academy of Sciences advises.

The academy's Space Science Board, in reports released Wednesday, told the National Aeronautics and Space Administration that space shuttles and their booster rockets could perform high-priority space science missions in the 1980's and 1990's.

"Our finding is that present systems are adequate to these needs," said Thomas M. Donahue, the board chairman, in a letter to NASA's Administrator, James Beggs. "Therefore, on the issue of meeting the needs of space science, our recommendation would be to use the space shuttle, together with requisite upper stages, maneuvering and propulsion systems for missions to be flown during this century."

However, looking into the next century, the board said it "sees the possibility that a suitably designed space station could serve as a very useful facility in support of future space science activities."

Concern About Space Science

The academy group expressed concern that a space station project might drain funds from space science projects, as the shuttle program did. If the station is built, additional funds should be allocated for scientific work assigned to it, the group added.

NASA has given high priority to developing a low-orbit space station. Mr. Beggs said in July that the agency would request \$200 million in its budget for the fiscal year 1985 to start the project.

Questions have been raised, however, about what uses could be found for a space station.

David A. Stockman, director of the Office of Management and Budget, who has said he opposes the station project for cost reasons, is considered the biggest obstacle to its approval.

NASA estimates a space station designed to be operational by 1991 would cost from \$6 billion to \$8 billion. The agency envisions a four-to-six person station that would be in orbit about 250 miles above the earth.

Mr. Beggs says the United States must build a space station to follow up the space shuttle project because the Soviet Union is committed to having an operational station in orbit by 1985.